

# EPHESUS

## – ITS HISTORY AND RELIGIOUS SETTING

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## Abbreviations

Ach. Tat.	Achilles Tatius <i>The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon</i>
Antip. Sid	Antipater, <i>Greek Anthology</i>
App. Mith	Appian <i>Mithridatic Wars</i>
Ath.	Athenaeus <i>The Deipnosophists</i>
Call. H.	Callimachus, <i>Hymns and Epigrams</i>
Dio Cass	Dio Cassius <i>Roman History</i>
Dio Chrys. Or	Dio Chrysostomus <i>Orations</i>
Hdt	Herodotus <i>The Histories</i>
HH	_____ <i>Homeric Hymns</i>
Hist. eccl	Eusebius <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>
J. AJ	Josephus <i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
J. Ap	Josephus <i>Against Apion</i>
Juv	Juvenal <i>Satires</i>
Or	Aristides <i>Orations</i>
Paus	Pausanias, <i>Description of Greece</i>
Philostr. Imag	Philostratus, <i>Imagines</i>
Philostr. V A	Philostratus, <i>Life of Apollonius of Tyana</i>
Philostr. V S	Philostratus, <i>Life of the Sophists</i>
Plin. Nat	Pliny the Elder, <i>The Natural Histories</i>
Plut. Alex	Plutarch, <i>Alexander</i>
Pbl	Polybius, <i>Histories</i>
Strab	Strabo, <i>Geography</i>
Tac. Ann	Tacitus. <i>The Annals</i>
Vitr. De Arch	Vitruvius <i>On Architecture</i>

## Source of Illustrations

Figure	Title	Source
1	Location of Ephesus	<a href="http://www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/Ephesus/map.htm">http://www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/Ephesus/map.htm</a>
2	Topographical map of Ephesus	<a href="http://homepage.univie.ac.at/elisabeth.trinkl/forum/forum1297/05wass.htm">http://homepage.univie.ac.at/elisabeth.trinkl/forum/forum1297/05wass.htm</a>
3	Ephesian coin with bee	<a href="http://www.perseus.tufts.edu">http://www.perseus.tufts.edu</a>
4	Temple of Hadrian	<a href="http://www.perseus.tufts.edu">http://www.perseus.tufts.edu</a>
5	Views of the commercial Agora	<a href="http://www.perseus.tufts.edu">http://www.perseus.tufts.edu</a>
6	The theatre in Ephesus	<a href="http://www.perseus.tufts.edu">http://www.perseus.tufts.edu</a>
7	Roman Era Aqueduct	<a href="http://www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Paul/journey3/EphesusAqueduct.htm">http://www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Paul/journey3/EphesusAqueduct.htm</a>
8	Classical Greek Artemis	<a href="http://www.mc.maricopa.edu">www.mc.maricopa.edu</a>
9	Artemis Ephesia	<a href="http://www.perseus.tufts.edu">http://www.perseus.tufts.edu</a>
10	Wood's reconstruction of the temple	<a href="http://www.perseus.tufts.edu">http://www.perseus.tufts.edu</a>
11	Column base in the British Museum	<a href="http://www.livius.org">www.livius.org</a>
12	Market at the base of the Imperial temple	<a href="http://www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/Ephesus/Temple.htm">http://www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/Ephesus/Temple.htm</a>

# Ephesus – its History and Religious Setting

## Introduction

Ephesus plays an important part in the formation of the New Testament. At least six of the books have or claim to have a connection with this city. Paul ministered in Ephesus longer than in any other city. Legend has it that John lived the last of his very long life in Ephesus which is situated near where he received his apocalypse. It is also where these same legends say that Timothy became the first bishop and the runaway slave Onesimus (Ignatius To the Ephesians, 6) would eventually succeed him. Legend also says that Mary, the mother of Jesus, also saw out her last days in this city.

While the provenance and/or recipients of many of the New Testament letters is contested, the traditional understanding of the authorship and recipients of the letters shows a very strong association with Ephesus as:

- Both Corinthian letters were written from here,
- Romans was written shortly after he left Ephesus<sup>1</sup>,
- First and second Timothy were written to his assistant ministering in Ephesus,
- There is a letter bearing the name of the city,
- John's gospel and letters are associated with his stay in Ephesus, and;
- The apocalypse was written on an island close to Ephesus.

If Paul wrote his prison epistles from Ephesus<sup>2</sup>, Colossians, Philemon and Philipians would also be associated with the city.

One writer summed this up by saying “. . . for one momentous generation, Ephesus was the literary focus of early Christianity, and by its compilations . . . influenced Christianity more than Jerusalem, Antioch or Rome” (Goodspeed 1937, 49). Without an understanding of the city, its lifestyles and the beliefs of its community we cannot comprehend the life situation that Paul and John were writing to. Without understanding what the books said to the intended recipients we may read into them a meaning not necessarily intended by the author.

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<sup>1</sup> It is suggested that our letter to the Romans may actually be a copy of the original that was sent to Ephesus as the greetings in the final chapter are to people we expect to be living in Asia (Koester 1995, 123)

<sup>2</sup> Now widely but not universally accepted.

## The Geography of Ephesus



Figure 1 Location of Ephesus

Ephesus, in Anatolia, Turkey, is situated on the Cayster River, between where it empties into the Aegean Sea and the Koressos Mountains. Three hills now known as Ayasoluk, Panayir Dagh, and Bulbul Dagh govern the topography. The city is built on their hilly slopes and between their narrow valleys. This topography dictated the growth of the city and its water

supply. Refer to the topographical map for their location.

Strabo<sup>3</sup>, the great Greek geographer, would note that Ephesus' location with an accessible harbour and being effectively the start of the trans Anatolian highway was the main reasons for its economic growth (Strab, 14.1.24 ).

## The City's Name

The origin of the city's name is not certain but it may derive from *apis*, Greek for bee. Some of its coins carried the image of a bee (Evans and Porter 2000, 318). Artemis Ephesia was the full name of the leading local deity which may also explain the name i.e. the city is named after the god, not the god after the city.



Figure 2 Ephesian coin with bee

Pausanias<sup>4</sup> refers to the founding of the first temple in the city by Coresus and a man called Ephesus "who was thought to be a son of the river Caijester" (Paus, 7.2.7). This is also a suggested origin of the name. Strabo says the name originates from the Amazons but does not say how<sup>5</sup> (11.5.4, 12.3.21)

<sup>3</sup> Strabo ca. 54 B.C. – 24 A.D., a native of Pontus studied philosophy and became a Stoic. He was an eyewitness of much of his geographical information making it invaluable for people in the higher departments of administration and international politics. He was well acquainted with history and the mythological traditions of his nation and was a devout admirer of Homer, and acquainted with the other great poets.

<sup>4</sup> Pausanias was a second-century mythographer and travel-writer.

<sup>5</sup> Strabo says "Smyrna was an Amazon who took possession of Ephesus; and hence the name both of the inhabitants and of the city, just as certain of the Ephesians were called Sisyrbidae after Sisyrbē" (14.1.4).

Insert map here

**Figure 3 ignore this**

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## The Founding of Ephesus

Strabo<sup>6</sup>, who visited Ephesus not many years before Paul, tells not only the historical but also the mythological account of the founding of Ephesus (Strab 14.1.5 also Paus 4.31.8). It was said that Smyrna, an Amazon<sup>7</sup>, took control of the city. After its capture the Amazon leader Hippolyte set up the statue of Artemis and started an annual dance around the city with weapons and shields (Evans and Porter 2000, 318). The Amazons would in turn be driven away by the Greek founders (Paus, 4:31:8, 7.2.6-9).

Little is known of this prehistory of the city though Mycenaean graves and artefacts (1400-1500 B.C.) have been found indicating a long settlement period. Hittite cuneiform tablets found at Miletus which refer to a village *Apasus*, possibly this city, have been found in the area. (Evans and Porter 2000, 318).

The earliest accounts are a mixture of plausible history and fable. Strabo, quoting Pherecydes, says that the area was first occupied by Carians (Strab, 14.1.3) who Herodotus describes as being Minoans (Hdt, 1.171.1-3). These inhabitants were driven out by the Ionians led by Androclus, the legitimate son of Cordus, the last king of Athens c. 1068 B.C. giving the city royal prestige (Strab, 14.1.3, Paus, 7.2.7-8). His descendants still had royal honors in Paul's time (Strab, 14.1.3). There was the belief that Apollo had directed the location for the founding of the city leading them through Muses, who took the shape of bees (Philostr. Imag 2.8). Androclus was given a vision that he was to found a city where he found a fish and a boar. When the Greeks landed at Ephesus harbour a boar broke cover, Androclus chased it and killed it (Ath, 8.62).



Figure 4 Temple of Hadrian

The story of Androclus can still be seen on a frieze in the temple of Hadrian. Pausanias records the death of Androclus in battle with the people of Priene against the Carians (Paus, 7.2.8-9). An elaborate Heroon<sup>8</sup> with similar artwork has also been identified (Koester 1995, 172). These varying stories, some totally myth and some a mixture of history and myth entered deeply into the

<sup>6</sup> See also Paus 4.31.8.

<sup>7</sup> These were a mythological race of fierce women warriors. They were so committed to martial arts that they removed their right breasts so it did not impede their javelin throwing (Strab, 11.5.3) Amazons were named after this practice *amaza* = breastless (Evans and Porter 2000, 318).

<sup>8</sup> A cenotaph or funerary monument.

religious consciousness of the Ephesians.

## The History of Ephesus

The twelve Ionian cities, called the Pan-Ionic League, were established on the west coast of Anatolia by c.750 B.C. The Lydian kings attacked the area and ruled over a number of the cities including Ephesus in the sixth and seventh centuries (Evans and Porter 2000, 318). Ephesus would eventually be besieged by Croesus c. 550 B.C., but despite his harsh treatment of the Ionians, he was the main benefactor in the construction of the temple of Artemis (Freedman 1992, 543). During this time of Lydian supremacy the population became more mixed than in any other city in the league (Freedman 1992, 543).

Croesus, the last of the Lydian kings, was defeated by the Persian, Cyrus, bringing Ephesus under Persian rule till 480 B.C. when the armies of Greece defeated the Persians at Salamis. The city became part of an alliance of Greek city states called the Delian league (Hawthorne and Martin 1993, 249) and in 466 B.C. Ephesus then came under the control of Athens (Evans and Porter 2000, 319). During the Peloponnesian war in 412 B.C., Ephesus sided with Sparta (Hawthorne and Martin 1993, 249) and then reverted to the Persians at the beginning of the fourth century. The Persians in turn were defeated by Alexander the Great in 334 B.C. Ephesus was taken without a fight which reduced instability that had gone back 42 years previously to his father, Philip's, time (Fox 1997, 117).

After the death of Alexander, his empire passed into the hands of his generals with Lysimachus taking Thrace (Fox 1997, 474). While the city had enjoyed better relations with Persia than the other Ionian cities, generally instability marked its political life from the defeat of the Persians at Salamis (480 B.C.) to Lysimachus' reign (c. 290 B.C.) (Freedman 1992, 543).

During Lysimachus' reign the city was rebuilt between the hills Buldul Dag and Panayir Dag over an old cemetery. A large city wall six miles long, seven metres high and three metres thick was also built over the difficult terrain at this time (Strab,14.1.21, Freedman 1992, 543). The citizens were reluctant to move<sup>9</sup> from the old city so the king flooded the streets of the old city by blocking the sewers (Strab,14.1.21). The new city was architecturally superior to many Greek cities that followed a strict Hippodamian<sup>10</sup> plan. The designers made "use of a winding valley for the disposition of her main monuments from a low saddle and so on down toward the harbour"<sup>11</sup> (Greenhalgh UD). The new layout served the city for 500 years.

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<sup>9</sup> Possibly because the new city was on top of a cemetery (Koester 1995, 144).

<sup>10</sup> Named after Hippodamus of Miletus who developed town planning based on a grid like pattern.

<sup>11</sup> Greenhalgh 's assessment is different from Freedman's (Freedman 1992, 543) but the topographical map with the city layout shows the city is not on a strict grid making the city far more interesting architecturally.



The city came under Egyptian control in 309 B.C. and was ruled by Ptolemy I Soter (One of Alexander's generals). The city changed hands a number of times but always reverted to Ptolemaic rule with an Egyptian garrison present as late as 221 B.C. (Pib, 5.35.2), Antiochus III seized the city in 197 (Koester 1995, 286). Antiochus was driven by the city's strategic importance. Polybius said "king Antiochus was very anxious to get possession of Ephesus because of its favourable site as it may be said to stand in the position of a citadel both by land and sea for anyone with designs on Ionia and the cities of the Hellespont, and is always the most favourable point of defence against Europe for the kings of Asia" (Pbl, 18.40a).

Ephesus was ruled by the Greeks until 133 B.C. when Attalus III of Pergamum willed his kingdom to the Romans. The Romans made Ephesus the capital of the province of Asia, removing the title from Pergamum (Evans and Porter 2000, 318). It would be many years before the city's relation with Rome would be settled and there would come periods of control by the Seleucids and Ptolemies.

During the time of the Roman republic<sup>12</sup> there was veneration of Dea Roma and certain roman officials (Freedman 1992, 543). At the end of the republic the city was also involved with the troubles in Italy and Anthony and Cleopatra were received in the winter of 33-32 B.C. Unfortunately for Ephesus, Anthony was on his way to defeat at Actium and the city suffered for supporting the loser. Ephesus also paid dearly for collaborating with Mithridates<sup>13</sup>, king of Pontus (150 –120 B.C.). In this insurrection 80,000 Romans were killed on one day (Freedman 1992, 543). Because of the harshness of the Roman rule Mithridates was seen as a deliverer (Hawthorne and Martin 1993, 249).

With stability under Augustus came prosperity and prominence for 200 years (Hawthorne and Martin 1993, 249). Irenaeus<sup>14</sup> said of this time "through their [the Romans] instrumentality the world is at peace, and we walk on the highways without fear, and sail where we will" (Irenaeus *Adv Heresies*, 4.30.3)" Ephesus not only continued as the capital of the province of Asia but enjoyed a building boom which revitalised the city. Strabo said it "grows daily, and is the largest emporium in Asia (Strab, 14.1.24). Building construction included the infrastructure needed for a growing city such as construction of aqueducts and repaving streets (Freedman 1992, 543) but also buildings that reinforced the city's political importance. This included triumphal monuments to prominent Romans and the "comprehensive Romanization of the civic space" (Freedman 1992, 543). This Romanization included a new large political centre called the state agora (58mx160m) surrounded a number of temples (Roma & Julius Caesar, Flavians (or Domitians) and Augustus) along with the royal basilica. Also incorporated

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<sup>12</sup> The Roman republic started when the monarch was removed in 510 B.C. and became the Roman empire after the autocratic rule of the Caesars was established 41-27B.C.

<sup>13</sup> Mithridates VI, was at last defeated by Pompey in the Third Mithridatic War of 75 BC to 65 B.C. He was one of Rome's most formidable enemies.

<sup>14</sup> Irenaeus, because of his association with Polycarp, is thought to have come from Smyrna near Ephesus in the mid second century. His comments and others show there was substance to Augustus' imperial propaganda in his *Res Gestae* 25.

were pre roman governmental institutions, the Pyrtaneion<sup>15</sup> and Bouleterion<sup>16</sup> (Freedman 1992, 543-4). The cults of Augustus and Artemis were probably celebrated here also.

Due to high mortality and inadequate fertility rates<sup>17</sup> in Roman cities, it was difficult for cities to maintain their population let alone grow (Koester 1995, 45). Despite this, under Roman rule the population grew sharply. Philostratos (c.170-c.247) wrote that “all men are carried there as to their native land, and no one is so senseless and inclined to deny the obvious that the city is the common treasury of Asia and her resource in need, and no one is so carping as to criticize the city’s expanse” (Philost. V S, 1.23). Migration of about 1000 per year was needed just to maintain the city size and about another 1500-1800 needed allow the city to grow from 100,000 to 200,000 over a century. Local residents would have quickly been outnumbered. Estimates place the number of outsiders exceeding locals at somewhere between 33 to 50 years. The broad multicultural nature of the city can be seen in the number of different gods worshipped. The tension that existed between foreigners and locals can also be perceived in Acts 18:24-19:41. Despite this influx the city would remain viewed as “a Greek polis, a haven of Greek identity”<sup>18</sup> (Koester 1995, 83)

Ephesus, at the end of the first century, presented itself “as first and greatest metropolis of Asia” in numerous inscriptions and its coins (Koester 1995, 34). It has been described as the leading city of the richest region of the Roman empire (Hawthorne and Martin 1993, 249). Aelius Aristides<sup>19</sup> also spoke of Ephesus being the most prosperous commercial centre of his time in Asia, controlling the affairs of the whole region (*orat* 23.24). Roman milestones to cities in Asia were based on Ephesus (Hawthorne and Martin 1993, 249). Philostratos after the beginning of the second century, claiming to quote Apollonius of Tyana<sup>20</sup> in a first century setting, described Ephesus as “a city which took the basis of its race from the purest Attic source, and which grew in size beyond all other cities of Ionia and Lydia, and stretched herself out to the sea outgrowing the land on which she is built, and is filled with studious people, both philosophers and rhetoricians, thanks to whom the city owes her strength, not to her cavalry, but to the tens of thousands of her inhabitants in whom she encourages wisdom?” (Philost. V A, 8.7.8)

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<sup>15</sup> The council chamber which held the holy flame on the hestia (hearth). It as used for “various ceremonies, banquets and receptions for official guests of the city” (Hawthorne & Martin1993. 249).

<sup>16</sup> The senate house used by the *boule*, the advisory council of the city.

<sup>17</sup> It has been estimated that the net population growth in the Roman world was -0.5% P.A. Infant mortality has been assessed at 33% in the first year (Koestler 1995, 45-46).

<sup>18</sup> This claim is based on the picture painted of Ephesus in the two remaining Greek novels of the Roman period that are centred around Ephesus, *Ephesiaka* by Xenophon and Achilles Tatius’s story of Leukippe and Kleithophon. This may have been more perception than reality.

<sup>19</sup> Aelius Aristides, ( 117-181) a popular orator during the Roman empire. His work shows has incidental value in showing social life in Asia Minor in the second century.

<sup>20</sup> Apollonius, from the south of modern Turkey, lived in the first century A.D. and was a teacher and alleged miracle worker. He received divine honors in the third century.

A serious earthquake struck Ephesus in 23 A.D. Buildings on the lower slope of Bubuldag (refer map) were destroyed and much of the cleared space was set aside for public buildings. The largest project was the new Tetragonos Agora, the commercial centre built around a 112 metre square with an open courtyard (Koester 1995, 8).



**Figure 5 Views of the commercial agora**

During Nero's reign the theatre was extended, the stadium reconstructed and a second storey built to the Tetragonos Agora. The city's basic layout dated to the Augustine period but the bulk of the building, in volume and quality, dates from the Flavians and Antonines (81-212 A.D.) (Koester 1995, 54). The public work during this time was mainly through local benefactors<sup>21</sup> The city received its first neokorate<sup>22</sup> during the Flavian period (69-96 A.D.) and also water from the Marnus and Klaseas Rivers and from Tire, a distance of 20 miles, was piped to the city<sup>23</sup> (Koester 1995, 9). Roads between the major cities were improved which increased urban prosperity and population mobility (Koester 1995, 54). During this period also, as a display of its wealth and pride, Ephesus decorated itself with high quality architecture, inscriptions and statues.



**Figure 6 The theatre at Ephesus**

<sup>21</sup> From Hadrian to the early Antonine period Asian and Greek benefactors could be promoted to public office and even the Senate. This gave them social acceptance and allowed them to move beyond their social setting (Koester 1995, 56&63).

<sup>22</sup> The term was used for an official who had responsibility "related to the precincts of a deity. During the Roman imperial period, however, 'neokoros' took on a specialized meaning. It became the technical term for a city where a provincial temple of the emperors was located" (Koester 1995, 229).

<sup>23</sup> This pipeline, like many of the public structures in Ephesus was donated by a private citizen, speaking of the extreme wealth accumulated by some.

The city with its surrounding areas grew to about 200-250,000<sup>24</sup> and during Paul's time the city may well have been at its zenith<sup>25</sup>. This is a population far exceeding, but for a few cities, anything found in Europe till modern time. Evans and Porter say "It was probably the third largest city in the east behind Alexandria and Antioch on the Orontes (Syria) but its place in prominence was third behind Rome and Alexandria" (Evans and Porter 2000, 319). It did have continuing problems of silting of its harbour. Strabo describes this silting as going back to Greek times and that attempts were made by control this by building a mole at the river mouth (Strab,14.1.24). Despite the harbour basin not being deep it could accommodate large cargo ships 30m long and of approximately 400-500 gross register tons (Koester 1995, 209)<sup>26</sup>.

Gymnasiums were always very important in Greek culture and six of these are known to have existed in the mid second century (Koester 1995, 14). The largest was an open space called the Xystoi (commenced c. 92)<sup>27</sup> measuring 200x240 metres. surrounded by a three aisled portico on each side and may have been used to host the Olympic Games (Koester 1995, 13).

Ephesus underwent an unprecedented building boom during the middle of the second century (Koester 1995, 30) and the city would prosper up to the late second century. It was ravaged by a short but severe plague bought back by Roman troops in the mid second century but more damaging was the deterioration of the eastern border of the empire. This deterioration was caused by the incompetence and cruelty of the Roman rulers in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. Problems facing the city and the whole of Anatolia were the "depletion of political and administrative leaders through assignments, aggressive pogroms against Christians, and the increase of foreign intervention from Parthians in Mesopotamia and from Goths in Russia" (Freedman 1992, 544). It was normally thought that in late antiquity the city declined but that is not substantiated by the archaeological record. It would be continually renewed, changing from a "Hellenistic Roman metropolis to a Byzantine-Christian centre" (Koester 1995, 25). During the time of transition and crisis from Roman rule the city continued to prosper unlike other cities such as Corinth (Koester 1995, 29).

Major construction funded by private donations, a key factor in the continual renewal and growth of the city virtually dried up after the mid second century till another great benefactor was found during the rein of Severus Alexander (222-235). He built, among other things, halls for the different corporations of artisans. The city would have to wait a century for another similar benefactor (Koester 1995, 14-15). Large construction work continued but the city, including the great temple of Artimus, was severely damaged by a number of

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<sup>24</sup> Calculating population figures are virtually impossible. Figures quoted go as low as 51,000 up to 250,000. There were known to be 40,000 citizens in the third century, to that had to be added women, children and slaves (Koester 1995, 42).

<sup>25</sup> Blaiklock and Harrison say the city was in decline (Blaiklock and Harrison 1983, 181) contrary to Freedman's assessment (Freedman 1992, 543). Strabo's contemporary assessment seems clear.

<sup>26</sup> This claim is based on the dimensions of an antique wreck found at Pantano Longaroni in Sicily.

<sup>27</sup> Refer to The Imperial Cult for the significance of this and the associated buildings.



seaborne attacks by the Goths ending centuries without invasion. (Freedman 1992, 544).

During the time of Valentinian (reigned 364-375) there was little building, the effect on Ephesus was worsened by earthquakes every couple of years. Construction resumed under Theodosius 1 (reigned 379-395) who was regarded as the new founder of the city (Koester 1995, 21). There were severe earthquakes in the 4<sup>th</sup>



Figure 7 Roman era aquaduct

centuries which caused extensive damage to the whole area and

Lysaimachus' city was largely deserted. The city divided into two, with one centre around the harbour within a reduced walled area and the other on the hill of Ayasoluk (Freedman 1992, 544). Large scale construction and renovations still continued through to the fourth century (Koester 1995, 15) despite a number of earthquakes. Destroyed buildings, such as the state agora, served as quarries for new ones and other items such as columns and relief panels were recycled. (Koester 1995,19). Restoration of the water supply and baths was a major concern (Koester 1995, 18). Up to the end of the fourth century Ephesus would still call itself "the first and greatest metropolis of Asia" (Koester 1995, 34).

After c. 350. the inscriptions honouring the emperors were written so as not to offend Christians and major Christian buildings were being constructed (Koester 1995, 18-19). Most of the twenty churches<sup>28</sup> known in Ephesus, date before the council of Ephesus in 431 (Koester 1995, 23). Imperial edicts in 391 and 392 forbade the pagan cults and Ephesus was able to be revived through utilising stone taken from the old sacred buildings (Koester 1995, 25).

It appears little changed in Ephesus between the fourth and fifth centuries and the city is known to be flourishing in 616 (Koester 1995, 34).

## Archaeology in Ephesus

The first serious archeological expedition was undertaken from 1863 to 74 by John T. Wood who was commissioned by the British Museum to find the temple of Artemis (Freedman 1992, 544). Fortunately he was able to find an inscription describing the route to the great temple which was eventually discovered under 6m of topsoil (Freedman 1992, 544)! But for a brief return to the site in 1904-5 the association with the British Museum ceased. A base from one of the great temples is on display in the museum.

But for the breaks between the two wars, permission to excavate Ephesus has rested with the Austrians. While this work has been extensive, much of

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<sup>28</sup> But for two, these were small and scattered throughout the city suggesting they served different neighbourhoods (Koester 1995, 23).

the results has not been available to the English reader. Despite this their work has been described as “one of the great gifts of this century” (Koester 1995, 27). Here we can see an ancient city without the intrusion of a modern society.

## Freedom in Ephesus

Democracy, with its love of freedom, is Greece’s great gift to the world. In the classical and early Hellenistic period, “a free city had certain inalienable rights, which usually included political autonomy, immunity from taxation or tribute and freedom from foreign garrisons” (Koester 1995, 234). Greek freedom was not for all. Pausanias tells of the conquest of the land by the Greeks and how at the nearby city of Miletus all the men were killed and the women were married (Paus 7.2.6)<sup>29</sup>. The Greeks treated the Asiatics like serfs (Fox 1997, 118). Greek freedom has been described as “the habitual freedom to make war or indulge in internecine feuds”<sup>30</sup> (Koester 1995, 237).

To the Greek cities in Ionia this love of freedom was no less and subjection to the Persians and the Romans was an especially heavy yoke. Fifty years after Alexander, Priene, one of the Ionian cities proclaimed “There is no greater blessing for Greeks ... than the blessing of freedom” (Fox 1997, 118). Two centuries of Persian rule went against all this. When Alexander gave the Ionian cities back their freedom he was treated like a god, especially in Ephesus (Strab, 14.1.22). The concept of freedom would be given lip service by the Hellenistic kings but in practice was limited or even ignored (Koester 1995, 234). Despite this, compared to other cities, Ephesus was always well treated by its invaders. LiDonnici comments (1992, 405) that the city “almost appears to have condescended to be ruled” while at the same time her freedoms were being eroded

Freedom, by the first century B.C. was no longer the inalienable right but a benevolent grant that a ruler could give or withdraw. In New Testament times Ephesus was a nominally a free city but the combination of the worship of the powerful city goddess with the Roman emperor made it firmly “a part of Rome and its new world order” (Koester 1995, 5). This really was a return to the situation with the Hellenistic dynasties. The Greeks solved this conflict with their love of freedom by placing the emperor “between human and divine. An intermediate position appropriate to the power of the emperor and the traditions of the Greeks was formed (Koester 1995, 234). It was now the emperor who protected their ancient rites (Friesen U.D. 38). Independence became interdependence as commerce grew and transportation links improved and the region, not the individual city, was becoming the important unit (Friesen U.D., 154). By the late first century there is little if any evidence of resistance to Roman rule and there were no longer any Roman legions in

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<sup>29</sup> Herodotus talks about the difficulty in marrying a woman whose parents you have killed (Hdt 1.147)

<sup>30</sup> Quoting Anthony D Marco The cities of Asia Minor under the Roman Imperium

the Area (Friesen U.D. 164-5). By the second century Rome had bought nations together and turned it into one city (**Aristides Or. 96.58-61**).

Freedom (Latin *libertas*) has as its counterpart, peace, (Latin *pax*) and these ideas would be part of Roman imperial rhetoric to the time of Constantine. With the unprecedented building boom under Flavian & Antonine emperors *libertas* became *liberalitas* (generosity) (Koester, 1995, 30). This bestowing of benefits became the cardinal virtue under Romanisation leading especially in the east to a pluralistic environment in the eastern Hellenistic cities (Koester, 1995, 30-31). Romanisation was an urban phenomenon and limited to the upper levels of society. This process ensured access to Roman skills and resources which led to wealth but for rural Asia Minor it was met with indifference as it had “no compelling social stimuli ... such as social mobility or wealth” (Koester 1995, 32).

## Religious life of Ephesus

During its long history the city changed from being a Hellenistic city through to a Roman and finally a Byzantine Christian metropolis. The three distinct religious ideologies were not three distinct cultural phases but “an integral process of social change each one building on and through the other ... in an evolving cultural ecosystem” (Koester, 1995, 29-31)

### **Classical Greek Artemis**

The meaning of the name Artemis is uncertain. Some of the meanings suggested are “‘strong limbed’ from *artemes*; or ‘she who cuts up’, since the Spartans called her *Artamis*, from *artao*; or the ‘lofty convener’, from *airo* and *themis* (Graves 1996, 88).

In Greek mythology Artemis was one of the twelve great Olympian gods. She was said to be the daughter of Zeus and Leto, and the sister of Apollo (*HH*. 27). When only a child sitting on Zeus’ lap he asked Artemis what gifts he could give her. She asked for eternal virginity, the office of bringing light, a bow and arrows, a hunting tunic and the company of nine year old ocean and river nymphs to care for her hunting hounds (*Call*. H 3. lines 1-30). She is presented as “a traditional tomboy huntress who stood for chastity and the rejection of marriage” (Baugh 1999, 452).



As her mother had delivered her without pain Artemis became the patroness of childbirth (*Call*. H 3. lines 20-30). Artemis is pictured armed with a silver bow - standing for the new moon (Graves 1996, 87) and like her brother has the power to kill or heal humans (Graves 1996, 85). She travelled in a golden chariot pulled by two horned hinds (Graves 1996, 86).

Figure 8 Classical Greek Artemis

Artemis remained a virgin and demanded the same of her assistants (Graves 1996, 87). She appears to have had a strong aversion to anything sexual. Among the stories reflecting this is a legend that Actaeon watched her as she bathed and to preserve her reputation turned the hapless man into a stag and his own dogs tore him to pieces (Graves 1996, 87).

Artemis was actually held to be a triad – the triple moon goddess. The youngest manifestation was as the maiden of the silver bow. She had the date palm, a stag and bee for her principal symbols (Graves 1996, 87). She would be served by priestesses aged 9-12 years (Graves 1996, 87). Artemis also took under her sphere the care of mariners (Call. H 3. lines 40-45)

### ***Ephesian Artemis***

Ephesus and Artemis were inseparably linked to the ancient Greeks<sup>31</sup>. Artemis was the most popular god in Anatolia held “in honour above all the gods” (Paus. 4.31.8). Pausanias claims this arose because of the association with the Amazons. There is evidence of her influence spreading not only throughout the Mediterranean but as far as Mesopotamia and Scandinavia (Evans and Porter 2000, 318). When explaining her prominence, Pausanias said “Three other points as well have contributed to her renown, the size of the temple, surpassing all buildings among men, the eminence of the city of the Ephesians and the renown of the goddess who dwells there” (Paus, 4.31.8). She offered stability that had stood the test of time (Strelan 1994, 79) and so was able to resist the draw to other gods.

Artemis Ephesia was said to be the mother and ruler of everything (Evans and Porter 2000, 318), the mistress of the earth’s fertility and protector of the dead (Koester 1995, 142). Those who called upon her called her Saviour, Lord and Queen of the Cosmos (Arnold 1898, 21). Her main role was as protector and sustainer of the city and its people, similar to Athens and Athena. One of the goddess’s processional routes was around the monuments that remembered the city’s history reinforcing that the goddess acted in history (LiDonnici 1992, 394). Despite her close association with the city, the association of Ephesian Artemis with the Artemis of classical Greek mythology seems slender. The worship of Ephesian Artemis was a practice described “as far more ancient than their [the Greeks] coming” (Paus 7.2.6). The form of Artemis worshipped in Ephesus was different to that elsewhere in the Greek world possibly caused by the Greeks assimilating a local earth goddess<sup>32</sup> with their own Artemis. Local mythology relates Artemis Ephesia as a fertile woman born about 7000 B.C. (Evans and Porter 2000, 318)

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<sup>31</sup> There are 524 references to Ephesus on the CD-ROM database Thesaurus Linguae Graecae. After deducting the 175 incidental references, one third of the remaining references are associated with the cult of Artemis (Koester 1995, 85).

<sup>32</sup> It is claimed that as the cult started around a fresh water spring near the shore and a sacred tree and that Artemis was originally “a tree goddess and a timeless symbol of fertility” (Koester 1995, 143).





**Figure 9 Artemis Ephesia**

The worship of Artemis Ephesia lasted a long time and her image, which changed many times, was the main symbol, not just of the goddess, but also of the city and its people. The original image is thought to have started with a simple *xoanon*<sup>33</sup> which was adorned with cloths and jewellery (LiDonnici 1992, 391). A new statue was carved<sup>34</sup> in the sixth century presumably for Kroisos' new temple. This image did not have the multiple breasts of later images<sup>35</sup>. It is unlikely this image survived the fire that destroyed Kroisos' temple (LiDonnici 1992, 400). Coins from the third century B.C.<sup>36</sup> show the traditional huntress but from the second century she is shown in the

form we know as Artemis Ephesia (Koester 1995, 95) which shows ornamentation that is common

to deities throughout the cities of Hellenistic and Roman Anatolia.

Many copies and reproductions of the cult image of Ephesian Artemis remain. These show her with many breasts<sup>37</sup> reflecting her ability to nurture (LiDonnici 1992, 411) rather than her virginity which is associated with Greek Artemis. Her body and legs are enclosed in a tapering pillar<sup>38</sup> from which her feet protrude. This is a feature more associated with Near-Eastern and Egyptian deities, rather than Greek. The signs of the zodiac were displayed around her neck which proclaimed to the worshippers that she "possessed an authority and power superior to that of astrological fate" (Arnold 1989, 21). The Ephesia Grammata (Ephesian letters) were written indistinctly and obscurely around the feet, girdle and crown of Artemis indicating she has a direct connection with magic (Arnold 1989, 22-3). Pausinius (quoted by Eustathius on homer Od) says that there were six "Ephesian Letters"<sup>39</sup> inscribed on the image of Ephesian Artemis.

<sup>33</sup> A simple carved image in which the original stone or wood is easily seen. Many of Artemis's statues are made of two materials with a dark head and hands suggesting a dark wooden statue under the cloths (LiDonnici 1992, 391). The gold and ivory figurines deposited in the foundations of the temple show such a statue (LiDonnici 1992, 404).

<sup>34</sup> Remembered as being carved by Endoios.

<sup>35</sup> Strabo (Strab 4.1.4) reports that the image at Marseilles was a copy of the sixth century image and the copies from France do not show the multiple breasts.

<sup>36</sup> Ephesus was one of the great mints of Asia Minor. An illustrated history and mythology of Ephesus in coins is available on the Macquarie University website. Refer to Burrell UD for the URL

<sup>37</sup> The protrusions from her upper body have been interpreted as a variety of objects. Three statues have nipples but similar "breasts" appear on a male god, Zeus Labraundos from Anatolia. Whatever their origin, they may well have been viewed as breasts from the later imperial period (Koester 1995, 86-7). They were certainly understood that way by third and fourth century Christian writers (LiDonnici 1992, 392).

<sup>38</sup> Called a term.

<sup>39</sup> Refer to the section Magic in Ephesus where these are explained.

Coins minted at Ephesus show her with a mural crown (like a city wall) which was similar to Cybele. Cybele was a Phrygian goddess worshipped in Anatolia from Neolithic times and was considered by the Greeks to be a deification of the earth mother. This suggests some merging of the two deities. Other coins show her with a torch symbolising her nocturnal nature (Koester 1995, 153). Acts (19:35) refers to an image that fell from heaven. Though there is no other reference to this phenomena, the claim of heavenly origins of the image would have helped her claim for great transcendent power (Arnold 1989, 22). The goddess could be seen in other ways than through her image. There are many references to Artemis appearing in dreams (Strab, 4.1.3-4, Ach. Tat, 4.1.4) and also in epiphanies (Strelan 1994, 52).

While Artemis Ephesia provided safety to the city and to those who fled to her sanctuary, there was a personal side to her worship as she was said to hear prayers and was saviour and helper (Strelan 1994, 51). The Ephesian Artemis was also a god who helped in times of transitions. Frequently Artemis is shown as standing in a doorway suggesting that she was the one who helped across thresholds (Strelan 1994, 51). She is sometimes called *Lysizones*, the releaser of the girdle. Girls put this on at puberty and removed it after their first intercourse at which time it was dedicated to Artemis (Strelan 1994, 49). Up to this time they were like Artemis, virginal and not needing a male partner. The transition from maiden to married life may have involved the maiden fleeing (like the Amazons) from her father's house to Artemis's statue only to be wrenched away by the male (Strelan 1994, 50). This god was also the protector of young men (Strab, 14.1.20) and men worshipped her in private (Strelan 1994, 53).

The relationship between Artemis Ephesia and her followers has been described as a "substance" relationship. Her power, which she was willing to dispense to her followers, flowed something like electricity. Herodotus gives an example of the city being protected from attack by Croesus by a rope running from the temple to the city (Hdt 1:26). This is different from prophetic-salvation-historical line of the Old Testament where God accomplished his own will through those who exercised faith (Arnold 1989, 36).

Her worship, which involved the sacrifice of various animals and offering incense, is not believed to be very different from that of other pagan deities. On some days a number of bulls was offered in a bloody sacrifice (Koester 1995, 142). An unusual feature was processions. One of the three annual processions was a circuit of Panayirdag which was originally a cemetery right around the mountain (Koester 1995, 142). She was served by Eunuchs and virgins though by Strabo's time the use of Eunuchs, in effect male equivalents of the virgins, had ceased (Strab, 14.1.23). Pausanias, 200 years later would say that Artemis was served by priests, called king bees, who would be chaste for 12 months, not eunuchs (Paus, 8:13:1).

*Ephesiaka*<sup>40</sup>, a novel about two young lovers by Xenophon, has a plot far more twisted and improbable than any soap opera. It shows how Artemis is able to preserve, through many trials, two lovers who want to remain faithful to their vows<sup>41</sup>. Artemis “is seen as a champion of chastity, not in a ritual context but in everyday behaviour, that is, a supporter of chastity as a moral value, a conventional Greek attitude” (Koester 1995, 96). A detailed word picture is painted in this novel (1.2.6-7) of the goddess during a procession which is of the classic virgin huntress.

When Lysaimachus relocated the city he called it Arsinoeia after his wife. This new city of Lysaimachus was not an improved Ephesus but an attempt to build his own city outside the interference of Artemis and her priests (Koester 1995, 144). This was not successful and the name quickly reverted to Ephesus after Lysaimachus’ death. Later Augustus tried to address the same problem. By giving Artemis back all the rights and property taken during the civil war, he hoped she would give up her claim to the city (Koester 1995, 146). The worship of Artemis inside the city was already established with her image established inside and outside the Pyrtaneion where she ruled with Hestia Boulaia. The latter may have served as her ambassador (Koester 1995, 146).

Inscriptions have been found that indicate that mystery rites were practiced and the celebration of her birth was one of the major occasions for the performance of these mysteries (Hawthorn and Martin 1993, 250). Strabo also says that on her birthday, May 6, that mysteries were performed but does not elaborate (Strab, 14.1.20). Little is known of the significance of these mysteries. Magic and mysteries could be linked and, as mentioned, the worship of Artemis was also associated with the practice of magic. The city “gained somewhat of a reputation as being a centre for magical practices in Antiquity” (Hawthorn and Martin 1993, 250).

The reciting of myths which explained the relationship of Ephesus to its gods and heroes was an important part of her worship. Some were secret and were related to a specific festival and time (Strab 14.1.20). They could be used to initiate into the tribe, bring salvation and give meaning through continuity with the past (Strelan 1994, 55). By remembering her myths the reciter was calling upon the creative and sustaining power of Artemis. When the Greeks had to justify to Rome the retention of temple asylum, the Ephesians did so by reciting their myths (Tac. Ann. 3.61.1). Strelan describes the myths as “maps” which “expressed the life-power of Ephesus” (1994, 57) He suggests that only Ionians (those descended from Ion of Athens) owned and controlled these myths (Strelan 1994,68)

During the Roman period Greek Artemis was seen as a unity with Diana and Isis and Ephesian Artemis was also associated with these two, particularly Isis who had a very political role in Egypt as Artemis Ephesia did in Ephesus

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<sup>40</sup> Two of the five preserved Greek novels are centred on Ephesus which give us a good look into religion and life in Ephesus.

<sup>41</sup> This same concept can be seen in the attempted rape in Achilles Tatius’ *Leukippe and Kleitophon* 6.21.2.

(LiDonnici 1992, 407). This close linking to Isis in her form as nursing Isis may have suggested a way of enhancing their understanding of attributes already implied in Artemis Ephesia (LiDonnici 1992, 408). The famous statement by Demosthenes about the roles of women in Greek culture “Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households”<sup>42</sup> (In Neaeram, 59.122) has bearing on understanding the role of Artemis Ephesia. The western culture tends to eroticise all female roles but not so the Greek. The goddess is fully gendered but she is not sexual. Hanging breasts were seen as grotesque in erotic art whereas in a wife and mother they were to be respected. In her “nuturant breasts that overflow with sustaining milk” (LiDonnici 1992, 408) she would be seen rather as the legitimate wife of the city and protectress of family, political and the universe's stability. This is why Artemis can be worshipped by virgins, celibate priestesses and married women without any paradox<sup>43</sup> (LiDonnici 1992, 410).

The edicts of Theodosius in 381 A.D. forbade the worship of pagan gods but the worship of Artemis was already in decline (Koester 1995, 146). The second century saw the educated turning to philosophy and the uneducated turning to Christianity or one of the myriad of new religions, particularly oriental (Koester 1995, 146). These were seen as providing better “answers to human concerns, especially to the crucial question of life after death.” (Koester 1995, 148-9). As access to Artemis' temple was always difficult in the wet and with changed perspectives and expectations, fewer people were prepared to put up with this difficulty so they simply stayed at home (Koester 1995, 9).

Artemis prospered during the period 50-150 A.D. even increasing in strength and “was well known throughout the world for her goodness and for the success she had brought to Ephesus” (Strelan 1994, 80). In the third century Artemis was still strong with her image still on Ephesian coins (Strelan 1994, 81) and the novel of Achilles Tatius shows her as the only one who can save. As Artemis fought for her survival, she was given roles that she did not exercise earlier, such as Asklepos<sup>44</sup>, to make her appear more helpful. Statues dating from the Roman period show her with Zodiac neck ornament which suggests a conceptual change of associating her with the impersonal forces of astrology (LiDonnici 1992, 407).

Artemis withstood Christianity till the fourth century but was still seen as a rival to it (Strelan 1994, 81). The fallen statues of Artemis slightly damaged during the earthquakes ca. 400 were buried by the Christians (Koester 1991, 19). Christians were claiming victory by early in the fifth century (Strelan 1994, 81) but grave artefacts show that Pagan activity continued into the fifth century (Koester 1995, 151). Three centuries after Constantine, paganism was still

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<sup>42</sup> Herodotus (Hdt 1.8-12) is surprised and suspicious about the concept of a man being sexually obsessed with his wife.

<sup>43</sup> Graves' statement that, in Ephesus, Artemis was worshipped in a second form “as nymph, an orgiastic Aphrodite with male consort seem contradictory to this view ( Graves 1996, 87).

<sup>44</sup> The demigod of healing and medicine.

strong as John of Artemis claimed to have converted 80,000 pagans and overcome the idols (Trombley 1985, 330-1). Even as late as the eighth century there were problems of Christians lapsing into paganism (Trombley 1985, 347).

### ***The Temple of Artemis***

Only superlatives have been used to describe the temple of Artemis known as the Artemision, which became synonymous with Ephesus itself. Antipater of Sidon, (2nd century B.C.) who compiled the famous seven wonders of the ancient world said of the temple of Artemis "I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, 'Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught (anything) so grand.'" (Antip. Sid 9.58).

Pliny (23–79) described (Plin. Nat, 36.21.14) the construction of the temple. It "took one hundred and twenty years in building, a work in which all Asia joined. A marshy soil was selected for its site, in order that it might not suffer from earthquakes, or the chasms which they produce. On the other hand, again, that the foundations of so vast a pile might not have to rest upon a loose and shifting bed, layers of trodden charcoal were placed beneath, with fleeces covered with wool upon the top of them. The entire length of the temple is four hundred and twenty-five feet, and the breadth two hundred and twenty-five. The columns are one hundred and twenty-seven in number, and sixty feet in height, each of them presented by a different king. Thirty-six of these columns are carved, and one of them by the hand of Scopas. Chersiphron was the architect who presided over the work." He goes on to describe how the large stones were placed.

Croesus promoted the worship of this "goddess of Ayasoluk" into the Greek Artemis. This was a political decision. The large marble temple was built over two competing cultic centres at the one site. Pausanias refers to Croesus' temple being built over an existing structure (Paus 7.2.7 also Call. H in Dianam 237-40, 248-50). It is said "Kroisos intended to unify this important region of his kingdom under the religious government of one mighty goddess" (Koester 1995, 143). Even Croesus' temple was claimed to be four times the size of the temple at Athens.

Freedman says that there were three previous structures – temples A - C (Freedman 1992, 545). The foundations for the first large temple (temple D) were commenced c. 600 B.C. and Herodotus said the columns were erected by c. 560 B.C. (Hdt, 1.92). Croesus paid for these columns and fragments have been found which say "donated by King Croesus" (Freedman 1992, 544). Construction continued under different architects until its completion about 220 years afterwards. This temple was destroyed; it was claimed<sup>45</sup>, by

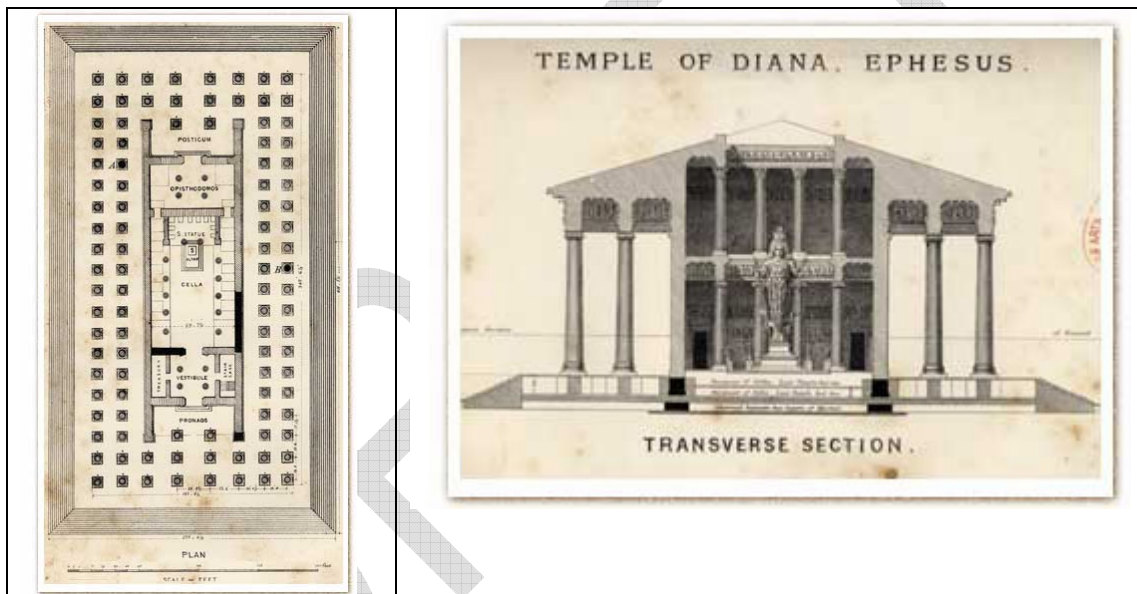
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<sup>45</sup> This may have been a conspiracy by the priests themselves (Koester 1995, 145).



an arsonist in 356 B.C. (Strab, 14.1.22) on the same night that Alexander the Great was born. The excuse given by Plutarch<sup>46</sup> for Artemis not looking after her temple was that she was too preoccupied with Alexander's delivery to save her burning temple (Plut. Alex. 3.3-5). Geological changes may have been more to blame, with Croesus' temple sinking into the swamp and a new temple needing to be built.

The temple was being rebuilt (Temple E) during Alexander's conquest and the Macedonian offered to pay for the rebuilding providing he was given what we might understand as "naming rites". This was declined by the citizens of Ephesus who said that it was "inappropriate for a god to dedicate offerings to a god" (Strab 14.1.22). Foreign political domination carried with it the stigma of religious domination as religious artefacts had been appropriated to Sardis and Persian priests "had to be accommodated diplomatically within the worship of Artemis Ephesia" (LiDonnici 1992, 401) By paying for the temple themselves the Ephesians may have been re-establishing the identity of the city.



**Figure 10** Wood's reconstruction of the temple

The new temple was probably built on the same foundations and on a similar plan to the earlier temple but was far more magnificent using white marble stones that were up to 9.5 metres long. The white marble was discovered 8 miles away by a shepherd called Pixodarus (Vitr. De arch, 10.2.15) who, because of his discovery was worshipped regularly under the auspices of the city's magistrates (Freedman 1992, 545).

The temple was situated in or near a grove of trees (Strab, 14.1.20) under one of which Leto gave birth to Artemis and Apollo. The temple was holy because it contained Artemis' image and the image remained central to identity of Ephesus up to the third century (Strelan 1994, 72). In the grove was a cave

<sup>46</sup> Mestrius Plutarchus (C. 46- 127) was a well travelled Greek historian, biographer, and essayist.

which contained pan pipes. A woman could prove whether she was a virgin by the sound given out by the pipes (Achilles Tatius *Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon*, 8.6.12). The temple was open to all except married women were excluded on penalty of death (Achilles Tatius *Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon*, 7.13.3). The temple also retold the myths of Ephesus through sculpture and paintings. There were at least four statues of the Amazons in the temple (Plin. *Nat* 34.19.53). Most ceremonies took place at night (Strelan 1994, 71).

Frequently there were meals in the temple which had the connotation of eating with the gods. Strangers were welcome and this bonded them to the citizens of Ephesus (Strelan 1994, 75). Citizenship was also granted by the priests at the temple (Strelan 1994, 75). Christian and Jewish participation in these meals and ceremonies had major social and theological implications. .

The temple of Artemis served a valuable function as “the common bank of asia” and the “refuge of necessity” (Aelius Aristides *On Harmony, to the Cities* 24). Despite being pillaged in the fourth century B.C. and destroyed by fire, the imagination of the Roman writers was captured by the inviolability of the sanctuary (Koester 1995, 98). Dio Chrysostom (c. A.D. 40-120) describes the financial services offices by the temple.

“You know the Ephesians, of course, and that large sums of money are in their hands, some of it belonging to private citizens and deposited in the temple of Artemis, not alone money of the Ephesians but also of aliens and of persons from all parts of the world, and in some cases of commonwealths and kings, money which all deposit there in order that it might be safe, since no one has ever yet dared to violate that place. Although countless wars have occurred in the past and the city has often been captured. They [the Ephesians] would sooner, I imagine strip off the adornments of the goddess than touch this money.” (Dio Chrys. *Or*, 31.54-55)



Figure 11 Column base in the British Museum

About 400 money keepers were employed who loaned money on interest and took mortgages and ensured that payments were made (Strelan 1994, 76). Artemis also controlled large estates with vineyards, along with quarries, pastures and salt pans (Strelan 1994, 76) collected fishing tolls (Strab 14.1.26) and also had sacred deer (Strab, 14.1.29). With so much money involved it would be expected that there was considerable corruption. Philostratus describes the decadence of the place (Philost. *V A* 4.2 Eph 65).

An area<sup>47</sup> of refuge around the temple was set aside as a haven for criminals. This area was also a refuge for men fleeing creditors, and politicians who found their lives threatened (Koester 1995, 100) and even slaves from their masters (Strelan 1994, 70). The area around the temple had been an area of refuge prior to the construction of temple E, and the practice continued. This right is said to originate in mythological times when the Amazons sought refuge there when they were defeated first by Dionysos<sup>48</sup> and then Herakles<sup>49</sup> (Pausanias Geography, 7.2.7). When the area allowed for refuge was too great “it proved harmful and put the city in the power of criminals” (Strab, 14.1.23).

This sanctuary led the temple to be characterised as the “last hope of desperate individuals, a haven of possible security of those battered by fate” (Koester 1995, 103). Stories of the sanctuary provided were legendary<sup>50</sup> but there were notable and gave abuses of this sanctuary. Examples are the slaughter of the Romans by the Ephesians during the Mithridatic wars (App. Mith, 4.23) and of Cleopatra’s siblings (Dio Cass 48.24.2).

The Artemision was situated well outside the later walled city and as connected to the city itself by a sacred way. This path was built over what had been a shallow bay in Croesus’ time but by the Hellenistic period the water had receded but the land remained boggy. Not till Roman times was the ground firm enough to build a permanent road (Koester 1995, 148) but the path frequently became impassable and people could not go to the temple even if they wanted to (Koester 1995, 149). In an attempt to stop Artemis’ decline in popularity a very costly covered marble walkway was built from the city to the temple, a distance of one stade (about 185m) (Philost. V S, 2.23). The temple was found by Wood through following the remains of this path. A second covered walkway has now also been found (Koester 1995, 150).

Temple E along with the city was badly damaged during the invasions of the Goths in 262 A.D. The temple was not rebuilt

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<sup>47</sup> Strabo reports these changes (Strab, 14.1.23) but the most famous distance was set when Mithradites shot an arrow from the corner of the temple roof. It is possible that the runaway slave Onesimus came to Ephesus seeking safety, rather than Rome.

<sup>48</sup> Also known as Baccus. This son of Zeus was viewed as the promoter of civilization, a lawgiver, and lover of peace.

<sup>49</sup> The son of Zeus and Alcmene who by conquering dangerous archaic forces was mankind’s benefactor by making the world safe.

<sup>50</sup> **Aelian var hist 3:26** says that when Kriusos (Croesus) marched on the city ropes were strung from the city to the temple so adding the city to the temple sanctuary and so the city was saved.



## ***Cult Prostitution in Ephesus***

Cult prostitution<sup>51</sup> is well known outside the Greek world such as in Comana in Pontus (Strab, 12.3.36, 11.14.1). When describing the practice in that area, which is outside the main Greek sphere of influence he refers to the city as a little Corinth “On account of the multitude of harlots at Corinth, who are dedicated [possibly followers of] to Venus” (Strab, 12.3.36) The practice of cult prostitution has always been assumed to have taken place in Ephesus based mainly on a reference to the practice in Corinth, another Greek city, again from Strabo.

Referring to classical times<sup>52</sup> Strabo said “The temple of Venus at Corinth was so rich, that it had more than a thousand women consecrated to the service of the goddess, courtesans, whom both men and women had dedicated as offerings to the goddess. The city was frequented and enriched by the multitudes who resorted thither on account of these women. Masters of ships freely squandered all their money, and hence the proverb, It is not in every man's power to go to Corinth” (Strab, 8.6.20). His references were to the past and in his own time Strabo would report that there was only a small temple of Venus in Corinth<sup>53</sup> (Strab, 8.6.21). Athenaeus<sup>54</sup> (c. AD 200). also discusses the prominence of *hetairai*<sup>55</sup> in Corinth (13.573b-574c) but the context shows it as something extraordinary particularly as participation in the state cults of any Greek city required one to be a free citizen of that city.

Some now confidently assert “cult prostitution did not exist in Ephesus” (Baugh 1999, 444 see also Freedman 1992, 548). Clearly the references to Corinth were to the goddess Aphrodite, not the Greek mother goddess, Demeter nor was it to Artemis. Baugh confidently states neither “Strabo, Pliny the Elder, Dio Chrysostom, Pausanias, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, nor any other ancient author speaks explicitly or even hints at cult prostitution in either the narrow or broad sense in Ephesus of any period. Nor is it evidenced in the nearly 4,000 extant Greek and Latin inscriptions from Ephesus” (Baugh 1999, 444). In Achilles Tatius' novel it is clear that Artemis's temple is not like that of Aphrodite as there is no sex there (Ach. Tat. 5.21.4, 8.10.6).

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<sup>51</sup> Cult Prostitution can be defined narrowly as union with a prostitute ... for exchange of money or goods, which was sanctioned by the wardens of a deity whether in temple precincts or elsewhere as a sacred act of worship. In such cases, the prostitute had semi-official status as a cult functionary, ... and the sexual union is usually interpreted to have been part of a fertility ritual. More generally, cult prostitution could simply refer to acts of prostitution where the money or goods received went to a temple and to its administrators. In this latter case, the prostitutes would be slaves owned by the temple (Baugh 1999, 444).

<sup>52</sup> Baugh, citing 8.6.20 of the Loeb edition of Strabo dates this to the reign of the tyrant Cypselus (657–25 BC) (Baugh 1999, 446).

<sup>53</sup> Pausanias briefly describes this temple (Paus, 2.4.1).

<sup>54</sup> He is described as a “somewhat greasy heap of a literary rag-and-bone-picker” in the preface to the Loeb edition of his *Deipnosophistae* (“Table Talk”). Baugh says “it is clear that Athenaeus's knowledge of various customs is derivative and unfiltered gossip or literary snippets. He hardly serves as a stable historical source (Baugh 1999, 448).

<sup>55</sup> Hetairai were sophisticated companions and prostitutes. They were independent and frequently ex slaves and foreigners. Unlike most women in Greek culture, frequently they were educated.

By minimizing the importance of cult prostitution in Ephesus, this is not to say that Ephesus was not immoral. It was large sea port and prostitution has always been associated with such places. But it seems to be just that, prostitution, not a participation in a fertility rite related to Artemis. The presence or absence of cult prostitutes in Ephesus can have implications for the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:9–15 importance in the discussion on the ordination of women<sup>56</sup>.

## Other Pagan Religions

While Ephesus was the cult centre for the worship of Artemis Aphia, there were also a number of traditional deities worshipped. This was no different from the situation in other large cities in the Greek east. “There was a plethora of Greco-Roman and to a lesser extent, Anatolian deities” as the table illustrates (Freedman 1992. 548). While Rome had been described as the sewer of the Orontes (Juv. 3.60-65) because of the impact of Syrian, Phrygian and Mithraic religions (frequently associated with very immoral practices), Ephesus remained Greek in its religion despite being an eastern city (Koester 1995, 282). Christianity and Egyptian cults were the only ones to make a significant impact in the religious life of Ephesus (Koester 1995, 282).

Name	Documentation			
	Literature	Coins	Epigraphy	Monuments
Aphrodite	*		*	
Apollo	*	*	*	*
Asclepus	*		*	
Athena	*	*	*	
Cabiri			*	
Demeter	*		*	*
Dionysus	*	*	*	*
Egyptian Cults	*	*	*	*
Ge			*	
God Most High			*	
Hecate	*	*	*	
Hephaestus			*	
Hercules	*	*	*	*
Mother Goddess			*	*
Pluton			*	
Poseidon	*		*	
Zeus	*	*	*	*
(Freedman 1992. 548)				

Added to the pagan worship of Artemis and the traditional deities was the worship of select individuals, sometimes even while they were alive. This common practice among Greek cities has been described as the “pious and grateful response to unusual benefaction, to miraculous assistance, to extraordinary civic or political contribution

or to a unique roll in the founding and history of the honoring city” (Freedman 1992, 548). Ephesian heroes include:

- Alexander the Great
- Androclus, the Greek founder
- Apollonius of Tyana for delivering the city from a plague

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Hodgkin asserts that “undoubtedly some of the new Christian converts had been cultic priestesses” (Gritz 1991, 116) questioning whether the “prominence of the sex-orientated mystery cult of Artemis would prompt a social, though non Christian acceptability of sexual immorality” (Gritz 1991, 114).

- Pixodarus Evangelus for discovering the marble quarry from which the temple was built
- Publius Servilius Isauricus, Roman proconsul 40-44 B.C. for his just treatment and advocacy of the city in official issues (Freedman 1992, 548)

## ***Egyptian Cults***

Though Egyptian religious artifacts have been found back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Koester 1995, 282), but in the third century with the presence of Egyptian merchants and occupation the worship of Egyptian gods became more prominent. Their worship is known to continue up to the fourth century A.D. (Koester 1995, 304). It is argued that the widespread adoption of Egyptian deities in other cities during the Ptolemies even when there was no occupation may have been motivated by political considerations, nor primarily religious (Koester 1995, 286).

The cult gained prominence in the second century A.D., the time of Christian expansion in Ephesus.

## ***Imperial cult***

Neokoros the term that became synonymous with the provincial cults is Latin for temple warden. The term evolved from referring simply to a temple official through to its benefactor and finally to a city (Koester 1995, 229-30). A coin from 65/66<sup>57</sup> A.D. refers to Neokoros Ephesus which probably means that the city was the neokoros of Artemis (Koester 1995, 231). In Acts 19:35 Ephesus is also called the neokoros of Artemis. The term at this stage was unofficial.

During Augustus' time the temples of Divius Julius and De Roma were built in Ephesus to serve the needs of provincial Romans so making little impact on local Ephesians. At the instigation of the province (Dio Cass 51.20.6) approval was given in 29 B.C. to build a neokoros (though not termed that at the time) to Rome and Augustus in Pergamum for the use of Asians and foreigners (Koester 1995, 107). Tacitus explains the rationale behind Rome's willing acceptance of this request saying "In the Greek cities license and impunity in establishing sanctuaries were on the increase. Temples were thronged with the vilest of the slaves; the same refuge screened the debtor against his creditor, as well as men suspected of capital offences. No authority was strong enough to check the turbulence of a people which protected the crimes of men as much as the worship of the gods"<sup>58</sup> (Tac. Ann, 3.60)

A second temple to Tiberius, the then emperor, Livia (his mother and wife of Augustus) and the Senate was built in Smyrna (approval given in 26 A.D.)

<sup>57</sup> The only earlier reference to a city calling itself a neokoros is Kyzikos in 38 A.D. (Koester 1995, 231).

<sup>58</sup> It is difficult to understand the validity of this argument as the traditional temples did not appear to lose their rights as sanctuaries.

(Friesen U.D. 16). No province had been granted a second neokoros beforehand. Ephesus was rejected as the centre because the worship of Artemis was too strong (Friesen U.D. 18). At the instigation, this time of the “god” Gaius (a living emperor and not in association with anyone), a third, short-lived neokoros was established in Miletus, again over Ephesus (Dio Cass, 59.28.1).

Provincial temples were normally established for officially divinized emperors so to build a temple to a living Caesar was controversial (Friesen U.D. 13). Emperors in the later first century had no problems in following Gaius. A temple of the *sebastoi* was built for Domitian<sup>59</sup> as *sebastos*<sup>60</sup> and possibly his wife Domita in Ephesus (Friesen U.D. 36) along with the other members of the Flavian family, Vespasian and Titus (Friesen U.D. 48). This is a step back from Gaius’s position from an individual to a family. After Domitian’s death and the *damnatio memoriae* his name was removed but the cult was too firmly established and plural *sebastoi* could still be associated with the other family members<sup>61</sup>, concentrating on Vespasian (Friesen U.D., 49). The temple prospered for another century.

Neokoros is first known to be used officially on inscriptions on the bases of statues donated by the Asian cities in the temple of Flavian Sebastoi dedicated 88/91A.D.<sup>62</sup>(Friesen U.D. 44) The inscriptions<sup>63</sup> show the tension between the cities and Ephesus over the establishment of the Provincial imperial cult in Ephesus. “The free cities represented themselves as the ones who had bestowed the provincial temple on Ephesus, thereby placing Ephesus in their debt” (Koester 1995, 234). The Asian cities attempt to have Ephesus view itself as simply a temple warden, the old meaning of the word, failed and the city would view itself as the benefactor (Koester 1995, 235). The term neokoros would become a converted title and appear at the beginning of public inscriptions from the beginning of the first century (Koester 1995, 235).<sup>64</sup> During Domitian’s reign coins were issued referring to Ephesus as “twice neokoros” that of Artemis and the Sebastoi (Friesen U.D. 56). It had two dominant and equal cults and all the citizens were the protectors of them (Friesen U.D. 57). This was a fundamental shift in how the city viewed itself and it was now tied to the worship of the Emperor (Koester 195, 236). For Ephesus, the privilege would bring prominence in regional affairs, access to the best offices, religious tourists, entertainment and new revenue streams. (Friesen U.D. 38, 164).

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<sup>59</sup> Probably as a result of Domitian’s opposition to corrupt Roman governors and starting to reform the tax system (Friesen U.D., 158, 160).

<sup>60</sup> literal Greek translation of the Latin term *Augustus*.

<sup>61</sup> After Domitian’s death there appeared to be no stigma associated with activities associated with Domitian or the strong provincial loyalty to the Flavians (Friesen U.D., 138).

<sup>62</sup> This timing may match the writing of Revelation as some see the establishment of the imperial cult as the reason for its writing.

<sup>63</sup> Thirteen of these have been found (Koester 1995, 232).

<sup>64</sup> After Ephesus first used this title many other cities would follow (Koester 1995, 236).



**Figure 12 Market at base of the imperial temple**

The construction associated with the imperial cult remodelled the city (Friesen U.D., 160). The Greek style temple (7.5 x 13 metres inside measurements and on a 34 x 24 metre base) was built on a 83.6 x 64.6 metre terrace on valuable land in the city centre (Friesen U.D., 63-64, 66-67). A redeveloped commercial area was also built adjacent to the temple with a colonnade of gods and goddesses looked down upon by the temple which contained a very large statue of Titus (Friesen U.D. 60-61). This stated that the people's gods and goddesses supported the emperor and that the emperor, in his supreme role, united the cultic systems of the people of the empire (Friesen U.D., 75, 119). At the same time as the temple, the largest gymnasium and bath complex in Asia Minor, also related to the cult (Friesen U.D. 137) was built near the harbour.

This complex combined a Roman bath, palaestra<sup>65</sup> and traditional gymnasium merging traditional Greek athletic values with Roman culture and hot water bathing (Friesen U.D., 124). The capital of Asia was a traditional Greek city with roman loyalties. These buildings measured 360 metres long by 240 metres wide and were constructed to host the Ephesian Olympics held in honour of Domitian (Friesen U.D., 123).

Athletic festivals were celebrated regularly during the imperial time and some games started to be associated with the cult, the first being in Pergamum for Rome and Augustus (Friesen U.D., 114-5). The Ephesian Olympic games, based on the Panhellenic Olympic games, were held in c. 90 A.D. in honour of Domitian (Friesen U.D., 134) and lapsed after his disgrace till c.115 when it was likely held in honour of Hadrian (Friesen U.D., 117-8). Ephesus had few ties with Olympian Zeus, concentrating instead on his twins Artemis and Apollo who was now hailed as Emperor Caesar Hadrian Zeus Olympus<sup>66</sup> (Friesen U.D. 118). This rearranged the hierarchy of the gods and placed the emperor in a direct and superior relationship to Artemis as did the terrace of the temple. This built on, rather than rejected, the local religious tradition. Olympian religion was concerned with the preservation of the ancient ways and relationships under a proper hierarchy. Temples, games, priesthoods, sacrifices and reverence were more important than "emotional sincerity, assent to doctrines, or divine essence" (Friesen U.D., 166)

While we have no indication of what the ritual activity entailed (Friesen U.D., 142) but we do know that the Imperial cult was taken seriously. It was not just political ritual. In antiquity, all aspects of life, social, religious, economic and

<sup>65</sup> An ancient Greek wrestling school, an essential addition to a gymnasium in Greek athletics.

<sup>66</sup> This follows Domitian's lead. A coin shows Domitian's head on the obverse along with the inscription proclaiming him as emperor and god while the reverse shows Zeus Olympia holding in his right hand the statue of Artemis (Friesen U.D. 119). This goes far beyond the twice neokoros coin where both were equal.

political were intricately intertwined (Harland 1996,322). The temple of Sebastoi was Asia's third operating imperial temple at a time when all other provinces had only one (Koester 1995, 245). In this, Asia was leading the empire in the path of emperor worship<sup>67</sup>. Did the Greeks believe the emperor was a god? There is no evidence of fulfilled prayer by any emperor, dead or alive (Arnold 1989, 37) but there is records of intense religious experience associated with these gods. Harland cites "a letter from an association of Demetriasts in Ephesus to the proconsul of the province of Asia about 88-89 CE (*IEph* 213). In the letter the Demetriasts make their request as follows: Mysteries and sacrifices are performed each year in Ephesus, lord, to Demeter Karpophoros and Thesmophoros and to the *Sebastoi* gods by *mystai*<sup>68</sup> with great purity and lawful customs together with the priestesses" (Harland 1996, 331). He also cites inscriptions which show how thoroughly emperor worship infiltrated not just religions but also the associations<sup>69</sup>. One example was an association of "physicians who sacrifice to the ancestor Asklepios and to the *Sebastoi*" (*IEph* 719). (Harland 1996, 330)

They must surely have seen the inconsistency in saying that Caesar was god and the fact that he would have sacrifices made to the other gods. Yet the vast majority of evidence equates the emperor with the gods<sup>70</sup> (Friensen U.D., 149). Certainly "the worship of the emperor was an extension of diplomacy" and "were a way of representing power relationships" (Koester 1995, 242). In this way they did not honour the Emperor so much as define him (Koester 1995, 242). The emperor, in a very visible way, was creating a world pleasing to the gods and so functioned like a god to the Ephesians (Friensen U.D., 150-3). The gods in their turn protected the emperor (Friensen U.D., 152) and the people could show their gratitude and dependence through the cult (Friensen U.D., 164).

Ephesus gained the official title and exceptional honour of "twice Neokoros" in the 130's after the building a temple of Hadrian. The city went even further when it gained the right to build temples to the brother-emperors (and sworn enemies) Caracalla and Geta. While a new temple was built for Geta. Caracalla allowed his honour to be given to Artemis. Geta soon after was killed by Caracalla and any evidence of his worship was erased. "Ephesus was thus officially twice neokoros for the emperors and once for Artemis, for a total of three." In 218, an unprecedented fourth imperial temple was built for Emperor Elagabalus. He was unpopular and was soon killed and as before all memory of him erased. The city reverted to thrice Neokoros. In the mid-third century, the emperors Valerian and his son Gallienus built the fourth neokoria; The empire was at war, Valerian was captured by the Persians and all mention of neokoria ceased. (Burrell UD)

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<sup>67</sup> It may well be that Revelation dates from this time and reflects this rise of emperor worship.

<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately we do not know what these mysteries were.

<sup>69</sup> Harland says "Out of about one hundred inscriptions relating to associations and guilds in Ephesus (I-III CE) over twenty pertain in some way either to worshipping or honouring the emperor in a private or public setting or to some direct or indirect contact with the emperor, imperial cult or its functionaries" (1996, 224)

<sup>70</sup> An example is a letter to the Roman proconsul L. Mestrius Florus saying that "mysteries and sacrifices "were made to Demeter Karpophoros and Thesmophoros, and to the gods Sebastoi by the initiates in Ephesus every year"" (Friensen U.D., 149).

## ***Women in Ephesian Cults***

Women in Asia Minor were more conspicuous in religious life than elsewhere (Strelan 1994, 120). They served an important role<sup>71</sup> in the religious life of Ephesus sometimes even serving as priests. This would be expected following the role of the Amazons in founding the worship of Artemis Ephesia (Pausanius History of Greece, 7.2.4). A number of these women were known to have held this office in their own right, not being dependant on their husbands (Friesen U.D., 84-86, Strelan 1994, 120). They were actually involved in the sacrificial activities from c. 45 A.D. (Friesen U.D., 113). Women also served as priestesses in the Artemisia and in the cult of Hestia Boulaia in the civic centre. In the Imperial cult 26% of the 138 known high priests were women (Koester 1995, 58). This prominent role would not be unnoticed by Ephesian Jews and Christians.

For women, Artemis who consorted with women and as the huntress took many of the roles that were seen as male, represented life without being constrained by men<sup>72</sup> The goddess brought the power of women into the realm of men and for men (Strelan 1994, 122). Greek women's status and honour frequently came with marriage and families so Artemis's role in preparing maidens for this role was very important (Strelan 1994, 120).

Demeter, who was the goddess of corn, also had a strong following in Ephesus (Hdt 6.16). The *Thesmophoria* was a three day festival exclusive to married women which was intended to "promote the fertility and productivity of both women and cereals and to celebrate the procreative qualities of women" During this festival in which the women acted as virgins waiting to be married, they participated in things excluded to them in normal life" (Strelan 1994, 121). In this festival they could organise a women's society, stay outside overnight and perform private secret rituals which included the otherwise forbidden drinking of wine. They even organised women guards to keep men away (Strelan 1994, 121). The "wild" nature of this living is in stark contrast to their every day married life, tamed, civilized and domesticated.

Another cult essentially for women was Dionysus. Dionysus in Greek mythology drove the Amazons to find refuge with Artemis in Ephesus. This double god of life and death was both male and female bringing the power of men into the realm of women (Strelan 1994, 122). He entered the underworld looking for his mother and came out with the gift of life and celebration (Strelan 1994, 122). This "twin to himself" (*Aristides Orationes*.

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<sup>71</sup> In Asia Minor, 28 women are known to have held the position of *pyrtanis* (a position of very high rank involving the finances and cultic life of the city) in eight cities in the first three centuries of the Common Era; 37 were *stephanephoroi* (positions of high public profile and prestige, if not much political clout) in 17 cities over a five century period; and 18 women in 14 different cities held the position of *agonothetis* ( a position of responsibility for contests) in the first three centuries. (Trebilco 1991, 120-122).

<sup>72</sup> As her role was to prepare women for marriage she would have been seen as advantageous to men also.



41.4-5) was a god of confusion and described, along with Appollo by Achilles Tattius as “the most violent of gods ... who drive the soul towards madness” (2.2.3).

The festival of Dionysius, held in Ephesus’s cold winter, turned the city into the wilds of the city outside. The women went about in bare feet and with hair upbraided and ate raw meat and drank wine. All this suggests a trance like state which climaxed in ecstasy (Strelan 1994, 122). This possession by the gods was arrived at through chanting, dancing, rhythmic drumming and cymbals and the music of flutes (Strelan 1994, 122). By eating flesh and drinking wine the participants identified with the god (Strelan 1994, 124).

The *katagogia* was a festival where the worshippers of Dionysus came down from the hills into the city. Women would come forward to be beaten with cudgels to promote fertility and commune with the dead (Strelan 1994, 123-4). Death and blood were powerful connections in the cult and in this festival the participants would “die” and be at one with the god and so access his life giving power (Strelan 1994, 124). In the Acts of Timothy, Timothy lost his life when opposing the *katagogia*. There were a number of similarities to Christian claims.

Women had influence beyond these cults as well. In Plautus’s (third century B.C.) Latin play *The Braggard Warrior*, an elderly Ephesian gentleman complained about wives who were always asking their husbands for money to buy presents for their mothers at the matrons’ festival (in honour of Mars or possibly Ares), or give to the sorcerer, or dream interpreter, or clairvoyant or the soothsayer (691-699). All terms are female and all women charged for their services.

Strelan summarises the situation for women in Ephesus as; “With Artemis they “belonged” – they were part of the city, its cult, its traditions, and its wealth; with Demeter, they were associated with the cycle of death and life, production and reproduction, and so had power (even magical) on the estates and outlying farms and gardens of the city, as they planted and nurtured crops; with Dionysus they were able to transgress the barriers between marriage and virginity, between male and female, between humans and the gods.” (1994, 125)

### ***Magic in Ephesus***

Interest in and fear of supernatural power and the demonic realm gripped the inhabitants of the Hellenistic world in the first century A.D. Western Asia Minor was the centre of this flourishing magical trade (Arnold 1989, 5). It is not surprising that in the book bearing the name Ephesians<sup>73</sup>, there is a strong emphasis on the power of God contrasted with the powers of evil. The Devil

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<sup>73</sup> While there are arguments about who wrote Ephesians and from where, there is strong agreement that the epistle was written to western Asia Minor. It is likely to be a circular letter distributed from Ephesus.



and the various powers of evil are mentioned 16 times<sup>74</sup>. In Acts 19 Luke indicates that there were a substantial number of new Christians who had still been practising magic. Books that were worth 50,000 days wages were burnt by the believers (Arnold 1989, 15).

The spirit world was seen to exercise influence over all aspects of life. The magician's role was to know which spirits were helpful and which were harmful and also to know the operation, strengths and authority of the spirits (Arnold 1989, 18). By knowing the right formula power could be exerted for good such as enhancing sexual passion or for ill through uttering a curse. The practitioners of this magic crossed all religious boundaries, calling on a variety of names showing Jewish, Egyptian and Greek influence (Arnold 1998, 18). An interest in the divine personalities in the Roman Empire was superseded by an interest in divine power (Arnold 1989, 34)

Magic normally differs from religion in two ways. Firstly it is a deviation from sanctioned religious practice and secondly the results are almost guaranteed (Arnold 1989, 19). As magic was generally practised by the lower classes the magical papyri give an insight into the beliefs and fears of the common people in the Hellenistic world (Arnold 1989, 20). The reputation of Ephesus as a magic centre is linked to its association with the "Ephesian Letters". The "genuine" *Ephesia Grammata* were six magical terms that were most likely associated with Ephesian Artemis. These letters, known as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., became to be applied to written magical spells. These letters were either spoken charms or written amulets<sup>75</sup> kept in little sewn bags and were seen to have power to ward off evil spirits (Arnold 1989, 15). The holder of these names had access to the supernatural power of the being named.

As the *Ephesia Grammata* were written onto Ephesian Artemis' image, her power was given to them and to Hellenistic magic. After studying the magical papyri, Arnold concludes that "in many instances there seems to be little or no difference between calling on Artemis to accomplish a certain task and utilizing a "magical" formula. Magic appears to be less a substructure of the cult of Artemis than it is an integral aspect of her "religion". The magical aspects of her cult . . . would certainly not be viewed as unsanctioned or "illegal" (Arnold 1989, 24). Hellenistic magic in western Asia Minor was not exclusively linked to Artemis though as all known gods are named in the papyri. There was no real preference for a particular deity (Arnold 1989, 35).

Artemis is frequently linked to the underworld goddesses, Hekate and Ereschigal, confirming her own role as an underworld goddess<sup>76</sup>. The three

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<sup>74</sup> Only 1 Corinthians has more references but it is three times longer.

<sup>75</sup> The magical documents from Asia Minor have not survived but, due to the dry climate, a number from Egypt have. It is thought that these would be substantially similar to the magic in Asia Minor (Arnold 1989, 16). Strelan argues that there is no evidence for this (1994, 82) but it seems reasonable especially as Ephesus was a great port with regular contact with Alexandria.

<sup>76</sup> Strelan argues that in Greek and presumably Ephesian thought a goddess of the underworld did not evoke fear and dread (1994, 82).

are seen as possessing the keys to Hades (Arnold 1989, 24). As the most powerful ghost-goddess she had the power to deliver people from the spirits. Astrology is closely associated with magic because through it a person could alter his fate by manipulating the astral powers. Artemis, with the signs of the zodiac on her image, was unaffected by astrological fate and truly able to help her followers and give advice about the future (Arnold 1989, 28). The mystery religions were closely connected with astrology so accordingly the worship of Artemis Ephesia was also associated with the practice of mysteries. It offered a new way of propitiating the evil heavenly powers (Arnold 1989, 29). In the mysteries of Cybele, which are probably similar to those of Ephesian Artemis, the blood of a slaughtered bull was drained through lattice work in the altar onto an initiate below. The strength of the beast was transferred to the person below (Arnold 1989, 28). By adding to magic, astrology and mysteries the three overlapped to make Artemis's cult very powerful by having complementary ways of manipulating the powers (Arnold 1989, 29).

### **Gnosticism**

Gnosticism when fully developed was a heresy which was to plague the second century church. It is disputed whether this heresy actually existed<sup>77</sup> in the first century and scholars generally refer to proto-gnosticism during this period (Arnold 1989, 7). Far from being a unified system it was a speculative religious belief with its teachers taking as they chose from Platonic philosophy, oriental mysticism, cabbalistic Judaism and Christianity. Gnosticism took many varied forms, from gross immorality to a highly ethical life. This great variation has made it difficult to come to agreement on what Gnosticism even is. Gnostics were, however, united in their rejection of the incarnation of Christ and their attempt to come to God by their own reasoning.

The name comes from the greek *Ginosko* - to know or understand. Gnosticism's core was the "mystery religions which mediate secret knowledge leading to salvation and from magic whose knowledge confers supernatural powers and union with God. This was nothing new to the Ephesians as there were mysteries associated with the worship of Artemis. Gnosticism was set in the framework of contemporary philosophy, mythology and astrology and later Christianity<sup>78</sup>. The Gnostics were concerned with ultimate salvation and differed from magic which was about systematizing, understanding and manipulating the supernatural for present benefit (Arnold, 1989, 11).

Gnosticism taught God was entirely separate from the creation and so contact was made through a series of intermediary beings. This was necessary as matter was seen as inherently evil but the soul, however, was pure celestial element imprisoned by some tragic fate in a material body.

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<sup>77</sup> Arnold is adamant that no evidence exists for the existence of Gnosticism in first century Asia Minor (1989, 8).

<sup>78</sup> Because of Gnostic tendencies that existed in the first century, a limited agreement has developed between those who accept and those who deny Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles (Towner 1987, 96). The heresy in the Pastorals is said to be, if not full blown Gnosticism, at least an early form of Gnosticism originating in Christians with a Hellenistic Jewish background who merged the associated beliefs into orthodox Christianity. There are also close similarities with the Hellenistic Judaism found in Colossae Col. 2:3-8, 16-23.

Ephesus was a centre for early Gnosticism and Cerinthus (died C100 A.D.), who was trained in Egypt and probably reared a Jew, (Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. 2001) is the person associated with it. Hippolytus in his *Refutation of all Heresies* wrote of Cerinthus's saying that he alleged "that, after the baptism (of our Lord), Christ in form of a dove came down upon him, from that absolute sovereignty which is above all things. And then, (according to this heretic,) Jesus proceeded to preach the unknown Father, and in attestation (of his mission) to work miracles. It was, however, (the opinion of Cerinthus,) that ultimately Christ departed from Jesus, and that Jesus suffered and rose again; whereas that Christ, being spiritual, remained beyond the possibility of suffering" (5.21). Polycarp, a disciple of John, remembered an occurrence when the Apostle came across Cerinthus. John believed Cerinthus's message was so hostile to Christianity that when "John, the disciple of the Lord, (was) going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." (Iraenaus Adv. Heresies. 3.3.4)

## **Judiasm**

There was a large Jewish population in Asia Minor throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Antiochus III moved 2000 Jewish families from Mesopotamia to Asia Minor to secure his hold there (Safrai 1974, 152). Jews lived in Ephesus from the early Hellenistic period (J. Ap. 2.29). Three classical authors wrote about the Jews of Asia Minor in the first century BC but their works have all been lost (Trebilco 1991, 19). Fortunately Josephus sheds considerable light on the very strong Jewish presence in Ionia, with at least 12 references to Ephesus in his writings.

The Jew's religion was protected by Selucids (J. AJ, 14.10.22) and later the Romans (J. AJ, 14.10.23-25, 16.6.1) who accepted and defined their position on an ad hoc basis. The Jews were given the right to be organized into a community, freely assemble (J. AJ, 14.10.8) and follow their religion, observe their Sabbath and holy days, not be involved in military service, have money in Jerusalem as well as "sacred money" (J. AJ, 16.6.1-7). Support for the Jews by Rome in Asia Minor was:

- following the precedent of their predecessors,
- as a result of gratitude and mutual esteem between leaders (Hyrcanus II and Julius Caesar (J. AJ, 14.10.7) and Marcus Agrippa and Herod),
- because toleration was an important part of Roman rule; and,
- as it helped gain the support of the Jews and avoided unrest (Trebilco 1991, 11).

There was no significant support by the Jews of Asia Minor of the Jewish revolt in Palestine (66-70 A.D.) and the wider revolt in Egypt, Cyrenaica, Cyprus and Mesopotamia (115-117 A.D). Because of this the Roman government continued the privileged position of the Jews of Asia Minor

despite requests to the contrary by various cities (Trebilco 1991, 32). These privileges continued under the Christian emperors.

We know from Josephus that these freedoms could be abused or totally ignored by the Ionian Greeks. Litigation against Jews could be scheduled for the Sabbath (J. AJ, 16.6.1-7). As well their sacred money could be interfered with<sup>79</sup>. There was pagan intolerance by the Greeks of both a religious system that was very strange to them and for the special privileges the Jews experienced. The excuse given for this was that “the Jews inhabited in their country, they were entirely unjust to them [in not joining in their worship] but they demonstrated their generosity in this, that though they worshipped according to their institutions, they did nothing that ought to grieve them” (J. AJ, 16.2.4).

Jews had a very different attitude to membership of a community than did the Greeks. Safrai, quoting the Talmud said that a Jew could consider himself a member of the community after he had lived in it for a year or purchased a house (Safrai 1974, 434). This modern view of the Jews is in striking contrast to the Greeks which remained fundamentally tribal (Safrai 1974, 434). The Greeks considered membership of a *polis* as an exclusive privilege deriving from an hereditary position or by a special grant by the city (Safrai 1974, 434). A considerable amount is known about the citizenship of Jews in another Hellenistic city, Alexandria, but it does not follow that the same situation applied in Asia Minor. The most probable situation is that they possessed *isopoliteia*, the status of potential citizenship. This could be validated at any time by participation in the pagan rites (Safrai 1974, 438). Despite not having formal citizenship there were collective rights enjoyed by the community (Safrai 1974, 439).

The Jewish communities also showed a remarkable openness among the Jewish craftsmen in the first century (Safrai 1974, 482). Whereas the trades were generally closed to newcomers through the guild system this reception would have strengthened and promoted the growth of the Jewish communities<sup>80</sup>. Judea itself dominated the trade in very profitable luxury goods coming from Africa via the Red Sea or the Orient and Arabia via Petra (Safrai 1974, 482). The cities in Asia Minor were forced to accept these goods from Judean harbours presumably with Jewish middle men. Safrai suggests this as “one of the main causes for political anti-Semitism manifested by the Greek cities of Asia in the second half of the first century” (1974, 668).

Josephus shows a community of Jews in Asia Minor which maintained a concern for matters that were at the heart of their faith and which protected their Jewish identity. They were known to have built synagogues and the

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<sup>79</sup> This could be an issue if the region was experiencing economic difficulties given the large amount of money involved. Josephus quotes Strabo as saying that Mithridates stole 800 talents which belonged to the Jews and was being stored at Cos for safety. (J. AJ, 14.13.113)

<sup>80</sup> Consider the relationship of Aquilla of Pontus and Paul of Tarsus who worked together in the same trade Acts 18:3.

sanctity of their scriptures was ensured by Rome (J. AJ, 16.6.2). The temple tax (a half shekel or two denarii) was paid by every male and shipped to Jerusalem showing a continued loyalty to Jerusalem and the temple worship. This tax was granted the same sanctity as a pagan temple. In Agrippa's decree to the Ephesians (J. AJ, 16.2.4) people who stole this tax were deemed to have despoiled a temple and were not eligible to the right of sanctuary in the temple (J. AJ, 16.6.2). Jews in Asia Minor from 43 B.C. were exempt from conscription into the army in emergencies (Trebilco 1991, 17) because it conflicted with the Sabbath observance and dietary requirements of the Law. The observance of the Sabbath by the Jews was so strong that, as previously mentioned, their opponents scheduled court hearings for the Sabbath so the Jews found themselves having to choose between Sabbath observance and Justice. The decree to Sardis stipulated that the city was to ensure that suitable food was to be available to the Jews indicating that the Jews of Asia Minor were able to satisfy their food laws (J. AJ, 14.10.24)

Despite their Sabbath being given over to the study of the law (J. AJ, 16.2.3) and Paul's first ministry being in a synagogue Acts 18:19, no synagogue has yet to be unearthed and "there is a dearth of evidence (e.g. lamps) and of inscriptional evidence as to the presence of Ephesian Judaism in the Greco-Roman era" (Freedman 1992, 549).

The table shows what to us would be a very confusing religious scene with only the Jews standing apart from all this. When Christianity appeared on the scene it would have been seen by outsiders as just another religion competing for the hearts and minds of the citizens. Christianity and Judaism were both different as they demanded the sole allegiance of the believer. The Greek and Roman understanding did not demand this exclusivity. There was no problem worshipping one then another of the Greek or Roman pantheon for that matter even participating in totally different unrelated religions.

Opposition to Christianity would come from the Jews who in the face of the preaching of a gospel without the law proved to be zealous defenders of the law and Temple.

### ***Christianity in Ephesus***

The New Testament period can be divided into two, centered on the ministry of Paul and later John.

During the second missionary journey Paul, accompanied by Silas and Timothy passed near to Ephesus but were prevented by the Holy Spirit from preaching in the city Acts 16:6. At the end of the same journey (c.52) Paul passed through the city, leaving Priscilla and Aquilla to minister there Acts 18:18-19. Paul's friends found an Alexandrian called Apollus, who, despite teaching accurately about Jesus knew only John's baptism. Paul later returned and ministered in Ephesus for about two years c. 52-55 the longest period he is known to have spent in ministry in one location. Paul also found believers in Christ that practiced John's baptism and who had not heard of the Holy Spirit. Twenty years after Christ's death it was possible to find a strange mixture of accuracy and error when it came to understanding the gospel.

Paul's two year ministry was characterised by powerful preaching Acts 19:8 and outstanding miracles Acts 19:11-12. This led to a remarkable change in the believers as they forsook all their old ways Acts 19:18-19. Paul must have used Ephesus as a base of operations for spreading the gospel to nearby cities and throughout Asia Minor. The Apostle's opponents would say he had led astray a large number of people here and in the whole province of Asia Acts 19:26. The church was built and church government was established Acts 20:17.

In c. 57 Paul passed by Ephesus and met the elders and predicted that from among them heresy would arise and damage the church. He went on to prison in Caesarea and Rome but contrary to expectation arrived in Ephesus again c. 62<sup>81</sup>. He left Timothy behind to sort out matters in the church.

By the time of Timothy's ministry, the church in Ephesus was in trouble, but not in the full blown heresy that Paul had predicted in Acts 20 and I Tim. 4:1. Tradition<sup>82</sup> though not as well attested as for Paul says that John (and perhaps Mary) lived to an old age and eventually died in Ephesus. There is no direct Biblical evidence for this. Perhaps another 20 years on from Timothy's ministry, this long predicted falling away would happen during the time John was there and from where he wrote 1 John. The name of the heretic is known, Cerinthus. The church would survive Cerinthus with his followers going out from among them 1 John 2:18-19.

We last hear of Ephesus in the Bible in the warnings to the seven churches Rev. 2:1-7. While the date of Revelation is disputed it was probably towards the end of Domitian's reign 81-96. This church is approved for its hard work, perseverance, discernment and endurance. Despite suffering so much they had not grown weary but they had lost their first love – seemingly contradictory. In their favour was the fact that they could not tolerate the work of wicked men, particularly the Nicolaitans. If they did not change their way the church was in danger of dying.

Papias refers to two Johns, one who was in the company of the Lord's disciples, and another who is in another group and described as "the presbyter" (Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 34.4). Eusebius comments that "This shows that the statement of those is true, who say that there were two persons in Asia that bore the same name, and that there were two tombs in Ephesus, each of which, even to the present day, is called John's. It is important to notice this. For it is probable that it was the second, if one is not willing to admit that it was the first that saw the Revelation, which is ascribed by name

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<sup>81</sup> This assumes that Paul was released from prison in Rome and made a fourth missionary journey.

<sup>82</sup> The majority of 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christian authors say that John ministered in Ephesus at the end of the first century but there is not universal agreement. Koester makes a case for the Apostle John never going to Ephesus (Koester 1995, 135-139) but Raymond Brown assesses the evidence that John was at Ephesus as impressive (Brown 1996, LXXXIX).

to John (Eusebius, 34.6). These two John's have given rise to many alternative theories about the writers of the gospel and the Revelation<sup>83</sup>.

In the second century Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch while travelling as a prisoner through Asia Minor to Rome wrote a letter to this church. It stresses the need for unity (Ignatius Eph 3:2, 4:5) and to guard against false teachers. Ignatius refers to the Ephesians as fellow imitators of Paul (Ignatius Eph. 12.2) He spoke of a Bishop, Onesimos, whereas Luke only spoke of presbyters suggesting a much more advanced system of church government. He makes no mention of John. Justin Martyr was also associated with the city in the first half of that century

## Conclusion

The great port of Ephesus has now silted and is located kilometers from the sea and the ruins of the great city itself is located in a swamp, the great temple of Artemis has sunk six metres below the surface and was completely forgotten by the inhabitants. Artemis of the Ephesians is long gone from human memory.

While the ruins are just a tourist attraction, the legacy of this once great city lives on in our New Testament. Modern men and women still take comfort, advice and correction from the struggles of a once pagan community trying to live a new and foreign faith.

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<sup>83</sup> Koester is adamant that John the presbyter is the writer of the Revelation (1995, 137).

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